



HEALTHY PEOPLE. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

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## Health Advisory - Public Health Seattle & King County, 16 March, 2003

### Important Information About Illness In International Travelers Arriving In Or Returning To The Usa From Hong Kong And Guangdong Province, People's Republic Of China, And Hanoi, Vietnam

**This advisory provides information about the outbreak of respiratory illness with fever among persons who have recently traveled to Asia and their close contacts.**

**TO THE TRAVELER:** During your recent travel, you may have been exposed to cases of severe acute respiratory disease syndrome. You should monitor your health for at least 7 days. If you become ill with fever with cough or difficulty in breathing, you should consult a physician. Be sure to tell your physician about your recent travel to these regions and whether you were in contact with someone who had these symptoms.

**Where is the problem occurring?** An outbreak of severe respiratory illness (currently named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, SARS) has recently been reported from China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The cause of these illnesses is unknown and is being investigated. Although cases have also been reported from Canada, these have been in persons recently returning from travel to Asia.

**What are the symptoms of SARS?** Early symptoms of SARS include influenza-like symptoms such as fever, muscle aches, headache, sore throat, dry cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing. In some cases the illness becomes severe with pneumonia, and respiratory distress. Some close contacts of ill persons, including healthcare workers, have developed similar illnesses. SARS does not appear to spread readily to others in the absence of close contact with an ill person.

**Who should be concerned about SARS?** People who have recently traveled to countries reporting cases of SARS in Asia and their close contacts (i.e., traveling companions, family members) should monitor their health for at least 7 days after return and seek medical attention promptly if they develop fever, cough, difficulty breathing, or other respiratory illness. Be sure to mention your travel history to the health care provider.

**If I have fever and respiratory symptoms, does that mean I have SARS?** No, fever and respiratory illness are common in travelers and are not usually severe. Even the majority of travelers to areas where SARS cases are occurring will not develop this illness. However, because SARS can be severe, it is important for persons who have been to Asia recently and their close contacts see a health care provider promptly if they develop fever and a respiratory illness.

**Do people who have not traveled to Asia have to take any special precautions?** No, unless you have recently traveled to one of the countries where this outbreak is occurring or have had close contact with an ill traveler who has been to one of the countries where the outbreak is occurring. If you are planning to travel to Asia, you should consider consulting with your health care provider about deferring your travel.

**Is there a test to tell if someone has been infected?** There is no test to determine if someone is infected with SARS. Health care providers have been given guidelines for treatment and evaluation of ill travelers.

**Where can I find more information?** Updated information about SARS is available at the Center's for Disease Control and Prevention's website, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), and through our Public Health website at [www.metrokc.gov/health](http://www.metrokc.gov/health).

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